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# NEGRO POPULATION IN THE UNITED STATES

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Will the ten million Negroes now in the United States continue to increase at the 100 per cent rate of the last 50 years? How long will they remain 75 per cent rural? Is the cityward tide affecting them equally with the white population? To what extent are they leaving the South and moving into the North? A moment's reflection will show that these are among the most vital questions confronting the serious minded people of our land.

## *Increase of Negro Population*

According to the United States Census Bureau the increase of the Negro population was 120 per cent in the 50 years between 1860 and 1910. This population in 1860 was four and a half million (4,441,830). In 1910 the number had increased to practically ten million (9,827,763). It is interesting to note by way of comparison that the foreign-born population of the country was about two million in 1860 and thirteen and a third million in 1910. These two groups form a total of about 23 million people, or a fourth of our total population. In view of the many serious problems of social adjustment presented by each of these groups, it is quite significant that they should form such a large proportion of our population.

Much interest has been aroused by the fact that the 1910 census showed an increase for the Negro population of only 11.2 per cent as against 18 per cent for 1900. This fact has strengthened the belief of those who have been giving periodic expression to their claim that the Negro is "dying out." Even a casual study of the question, however, shows that such a conclusion is not well founded. In the first place, an increase of 11.2 per cent is about equal to the natural increase of any of the European people. The 1911 census of the English people, for example, reported an increase by excess of births over deaths of 12.4 per cent. This rate for 1910 was only 11.6 per cent. In the second place, the abrupt drop from 18 per cent of the

Negro population in 1900 to 11.2 per cent in 1910 is explained by errors in the censuses prior to 1900 and not by any abnormal changes in the Negro people. An examination of the following rates of increase since 1860 throws much light on this subject:

Decade	Increase	Per cent of increase
1900-1910.....	993,769	11.2
1890-1900.....	1,345,318	18.0
1880-1890.....	907,883	13.8
1870-1880.....	1,700,784	34.9
1860-1870.....	438,179	9.9

The well known errors of the 1870 enumeration of the South explain the abnormal increase reported for that decade. The sudden increase from 13.8 per cent in 1890 to 18 per cent in 1900 and the drop in the rate of increase to 11.2 in 1910 clearly indicate errors in some of these percentages. The explanation of these irregularities now given by those familiar with these three censuses is that the census of 1890 was an undercount, thus causing the census of 1900 to include not only the regular increase of the decade 1890 to 1900 but also the number of those not counted in 1890. The percentages of increase readjusted to eliminate the errors would be:

Decade	Per cent of increase
1900-1910.....	11.2
1890-1900.....	14.0
1880-1890.....	18.0
1870-1880.....	22.0
1860-1870.....	21.3

According to this series there has been a gradual decrease in the rate of increase for the Negroes of the United States so that the increase in 1910 was about one million persons in ten years, or 11.2 per cent. A comparison of this descending series with that of any normal European people increasing only by the excess of births over deaths makes it quite clear that a decreasing rate of increase ending in a rate of about 11 or 12 per cent is quite normal. While the returns of the 1910 census are a fairly accurate measure of the increase of the Negro people in the United States and undoubtedly nearer

to the truth than the returns of any previous census, there is little doubt that the omissions in the case of the Negro population were greater than in the case of the whites. The most definite evidence of these omissions is the apparent undercount of Negro children under 5 years of age. A study of the following figures from the 1910 census shows the probability of such omissions:

Age period	Native white of native parentage	Negro
Under 5 years of age		
Number.....	6,546,282	1,263,288
Per cent.....	13.2	12.9
5 to 9 years of age		
Number.....	5,861,015	1,246,553
Per cent.....	11.8	12.7

The numerical relation of these two age groups under normal conditions is seen in the figures for the whites. It is to be expected that the second group will be less than the first because of the deaths that have occurred during the first period. In the case of the native white of native parents the difference is 1.4 per cent whereas in the Negro groups the difference is only 0.2 per cent. There are three possible causes for this condition, namely, a high infant mortality, a sudden decrease in the birth-rate, and omissions of children by the census. The probability is that the three causes operated more strongly in the case of the Negro children than in that of the white, but the major causes of the abnormal relation of the age groups of the Negro children are undoubtedly the high rate of infant mortality and the failure of the enumerators to count Negro children.

### *Distribution and Proportion*

While the rate of increase of the Negro population is about equal to that of the average European nation, the proportion which they form of the total population of the United States is steadily decreasing. In 1860 the Negro population was 14.1 per cent of the total population. By 1910 this proportion had decreased to 10.7 per cent. Not only is this true of the total population but it applies also to almost all of the Southern States. Only in the Northern States does the Negro population fail to show a decrease in the proportion which

they form of the total population, this proportion being 1.8 for both 1900 and 1910.

*Proportion North and South.* In view of the increasing discussion of the northward movement of the Negroes, it is important to note the census returns on this subject. The following table compares the proportion of all Negroes living in the North with that in the South in 1910 and in 1900:

	South	North
1910		
Number.....	8,749,427	1,078,336
Per cent.....	89.0	11.0
1900		
Number.....	7,922,969	911,025
Per cent.....	89.7	10.3

These figures seem to indicate that the Negroes are maintaining their proportion both in the North and in the South. The change toward the northern and western sections is less than one per cent of the total Negro population. The increase of Negroes in the Northern states was 167,311 persons, or about 18 per cent between 1900 and 1910. In the decade ending in 1900 the increase was 182,926, or about 25 per cent. It would appear from these figures, then, that the northward movement of the Negroes was really less in the last decade than in the one preceding.

Interesting information on the movement away from the South during the last 20 or 30 years is given in the census returns on the state of birth of the persons enumerated. According to the census of 1910 there were in the North and West 440,534 Negroes born in the South. Negroes born in the North and West now living in the South were 41,489. The net loss of Negroes of the South to the North and West was, therefore, 399,045. By the same process Southern whites show a net loss of only 46,839.

*States and Counties.* The increase of the Negro population for the last decade is well distributed over the states. The largest gains among the Northern States were those for New York with 35,000 or 35 per cent, Pennsylvania with 37,900 or 23 per cent, and Illinois with 24,000 or 28 per cent. The Negro population of California made the largest gain adding 11,000 people, or 96 per cent in the

decade ending in 1910. The smallest increase, only 2 per cent, is reported for the seven states immediately west of the Mississippi from Minnesota to Kansas.

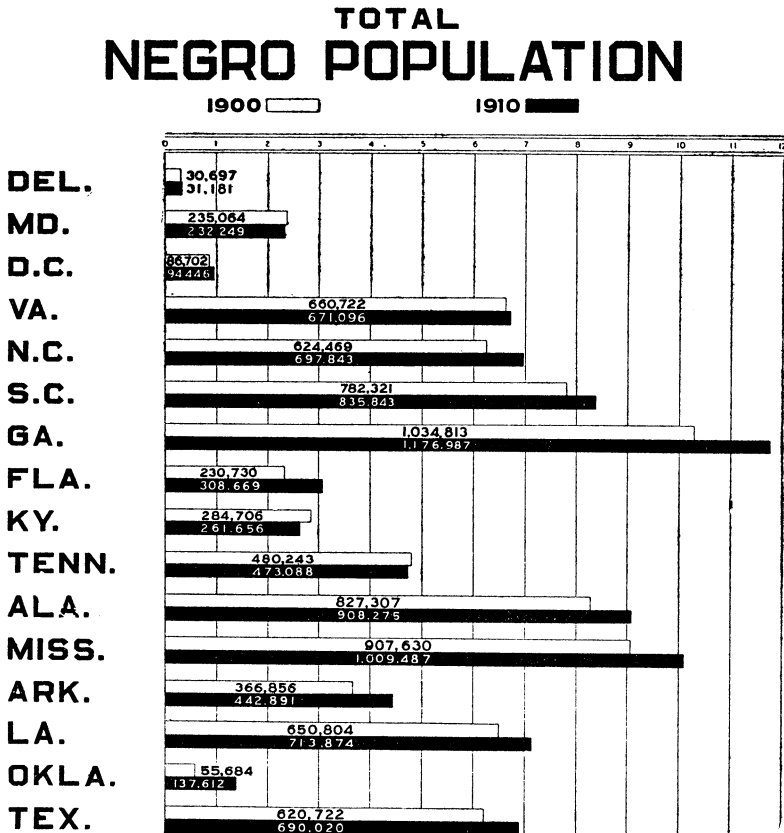
Closely related to the northward trend discussed above is the rearrangement of the population by states and counties. Among the most striking facts shown by the last two censuses are the decreases and the small increases of the Negro population in the border states. Of the six states in which the Negro population decreased during the last ten years, four of them—Maryland, Kentucky, Tennessee and Missouri—are border states. The increases for Virginia and Delaware were so small that they can be classed with the retarded group. A comparison of the movement of the white and Negro population in counties of the border states brings out some striking contrasts. In the 98 counties of Virginia, for example, the whites gained in 84, while the Negroes lost in 68. Similar contrasts appear in the figures for each of the border states. It is quite clear, then, that the movements of the whites and Negroes of the border states are quite different. The probability is that the Negroes of these states are attracted to the cities of neighboring Northern States by what appears to them superior economic and educational opportunities in these states.

The study of the county population of the more southern South, from South Carolina to Louisiana, presents a very different situation, as regards the movement of the white and Negro population, from that of the border states. In the 67 counties of Alabama, for example, the whites increased in 51 counties, in the decade 1900 to 1910, and the Negroes increased in 43 counties. Each of the cotton states with their large Negro population shows a stability of population and a prevalence of gains that contrast quite strikingly with the losses and differences of the border states. The population movements of these states seem to be governed by the same forces. At any rate, the two classes of the population apparently move and increase together.

The two charts which follow help to explain some of the points already made and present a number of other interesting facts as to the distribution of Negro population. The primary purpose of the chart entitled "Total Negro Population" is to facilitate the comparison of the Negro population of Southern States in 1900 and in 1910.

One glance at the chart will show that Delaware has the shortest lines, indicating a Negro population of 30,697 in 1900 and 31,181 in

1910, while Georgia has the longest lines with a population of 1,034,813 in 1900 and 1,176,987 in 1910. The "big four" of the Southern States are evidently Georgia, Mississippi, Alabama, and South Carolina, in the order named. The second point shown on this chart is the change which has taken place in the number of Negroes since 1900. The



most striking fact disclosed is the substantial increases of the more Southern States and the decreases or small increases of the border states. The three states decreasing in Negro population are as follows: Maryland, 1.2 per cent; Tennessee, 1.5 per cent; and Kentucky, 8.1 per cent. The probable explanation of these decreases has been given above. The percentages of increase in the remaining states

shown on the chart are as follows: Delaware, 1.6; District of Columbia, 8.9; Virginia, 1.6; West Virginia, 47.5; North Carolina, 11.7; South Carolina, 6.8; Georgia, 13.7; Florida, 33.8; Alabama, 9.8; Mississippi, 11.2; Arkansas, 20.7; Louisiana, 9.7; Oklahoma, 147.1; Texas, 11.2. While the absolute Negro population has increased in all but three of the Southern States, the proportion which they form of the total population has decreased in practically every Southern State. In 1900 the Negroes were 32.3 per cent of the total population of the South. By 1910 this percentage had decreased to 29.8 per cent. Over 50 per cent of the population of Mississippi and South Carolina are Negroes. Georgia, Florida, Alabama, and Louisiana are over 40 per cent, and Virginia and North Carolina are over 30 per cent Negro. These percentages are shown on the following chart for all of the Southern States.

*Urban and Rural.* In the South the movement of the Negroes into the cities is about the same as that for the white population. The following percentages of urban population show how parallel the movement is for both races in the nine Southern States which the figures represent:

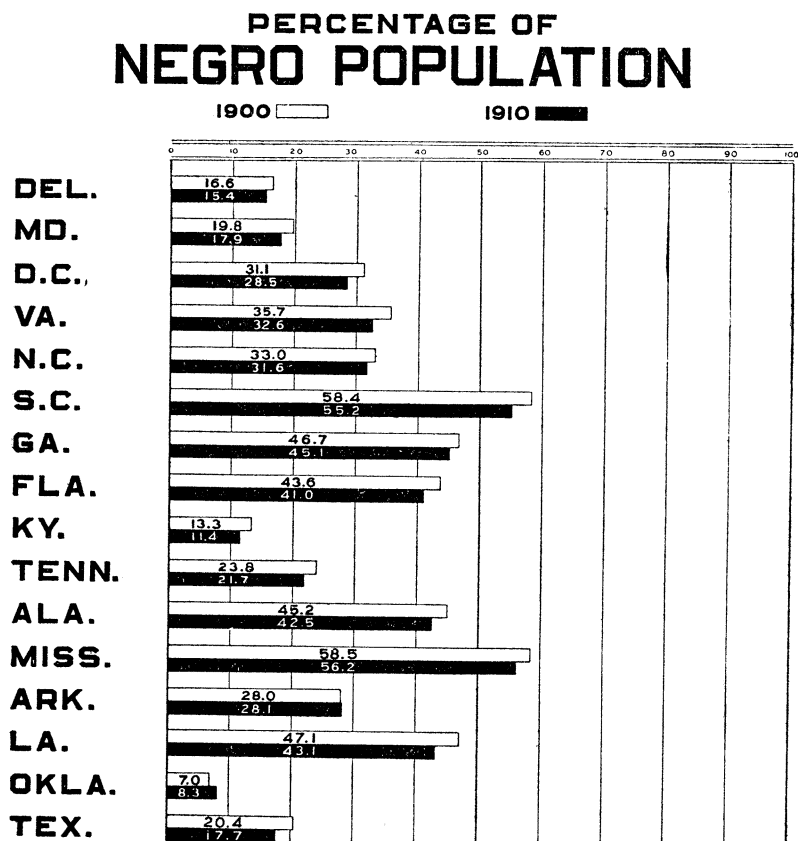
	1910	1900	1890
White.....	18.9	14.0	11.6
Negro.....	17.7	14.7	11.8

Up to the last decade the proportion of the Negro population that lived in the cities of the South was practically the same as the proportion of the white population. In 1890 the proportion for each race was about 12 per cent. By 1900 these percentages had increased to 14.0 and 14.7, respectively. In the last decade the white people have sent a larger proportion of their number to the cities than the Negroes. These facts are in agreement with the statements made above concerning the southern South.

Another fact, easily confused with the statement just made and not often realized, is the statement in a recent publication of the census bureau to the effect that the Negroes form about the same proportion of the urban population of the South as they do of the rural population. In the three Southern groups of states the Negro formed 29.4, 32.3 and 22.3 per cent of the urban population and 35.2,



31.4 and 22.7 per cent of the rural population. It would appear from these figures that in numerical strength the Negro is as important a factor of the urban population of the South as he is of the rural districts of that section.



In the North, the urban and rural distribution of the Negroes reverses the proportion of the South. In New England, for example, 91.8 per cent of the Negroes lived in urban communities; in the middle Atlantic States 81.2; and in the East North Central States including Illinois and its neighboring states the urban proportion was 76.6. All of these figures support the conclusion of the census bureau that

the Negroes who have migrated from the South have to a large extent gone to the cities.

The following table is a statement of some important facts concerning all the cities which contained at least 10,000 in 1910.

	NEGRO POPULATION		Percent of increase 1900-1910	Proportion Negro in total population
	1910	1900		
Washington, D. C.....	94,446	86,702	8.9	28.5
New York, N. Y.....	91,709	60,666	51.2	1.9
New Orleans, La.....	89,262	77,714	14.9	26.3
Baltimore, Md.....	84,749	79,258	6.9	15.2
Philadelphia, Pa.....	84,459	62,613	34.9	5.5
Memphis, Tenn.....	54,441	49,910	5.1	40.0
Birmingham, Ala.....	52,305	16,575	215.6	39.4
Atlanta, Ga.....	51,902	35,727	45.3	33.5
Richmond, Va.....	46,733*	32,230	31.4	36.6
St. Louis, Mo.....	43,960	35,516	23.8	6.4
Chicago, Ill.....	44,103	30,150	36.3	2.0
Louisville, Ky.....	40,522	39,139	3.5	18.1
Nashville, Tenn.....	36,523	30,044	21.6	33.1
Savannah, Ga.....	33,246	28,090	18.3	51.1
Charleston, S. C.....	31,056†	31,569	1.5†	52.8
Jacksonville, Fla.....	29,293	16,236	81.0	50.8
Pittsburgh, Pa.....	25,623	17,040	25.9	4.8
Norfolk, Va.....	25,039	20,230	23.7	37.1
Houston, Texas.....	23,929	14,608	63.1	30.4
Kansas City, Mo.....	23,566	17,567	24.1	9.5
Mobile, Ala.....	22,763	17,045	33.4	44.2
Indianapolis, Ind.....	21,816	15,931	36.9	9.3
Cincinnati, Ohio.....	19,639	14,482	35.6	5.4
Montgomery, Ala.....	19,322	17,229	12.1	50.7
Augusta, Ga.....	18,344†	18,487	0.7†	44.7
Macon, Ga.....	18,150	11,550	57.1	44.6
Chattanooga, Tenn.....	17,942	13,122	36.8	40.2
Little Rock, Ark.....	14,539†	14,694	1.0†	31.6
Boston, Mass.....	13,564	11,591	17.0	2.0
Wilmington, N. C.....	12,107	10,407	16.3	....
Petersburg, Va.....	11,014	10,751	2.4	....
Lexington, Ky.....	11,011	10,130	8.7	....

\* Includes population of Manchester.

† Decrease.